

Making the most of transitions

Will your child soon be entering middle or high school? During transitions, students often need a little extra time, attention and support from their parents. Here are some things you can do for a smooth transition.

Take time to talk:

- Ask your child would he like to know about the new school and help find the answers.
- Take all your child's concerns seriously, listen with empathy, and suggest ways to cope. Follow up in a few days to see how things are going.
- Let your child know it's normal to be nervous.
- When school starts, make time to be available for awhile. Postpone things that don't absolutely have to be done.

Be prepared:

- Make an appointment or get permission for you and your child to take a self-tour of the building.
- If the school holds an open house, orientation, welcome day or other opportunity for parents and/or children to get acquainted, be sure to attend.
- Talk about what will happen during a typical school day. Anticipate problems and be ready to help find solutions. If he can't work the combination lock, for example, practice with him until he can, or get a different kind of lock.

- If your child seems very stressed or unhappy, or if his problems are serious, get help. It's best to deal with problems early, before they become overwhelming. Start with the teacher or counselor. Clearly identify your concerns and take concrete steps to solve them.

Stay involved:

- Your role as a partner in your children's education doesn't end when they move into middle and high school. Learn about school policies, education standards, and curriculum.
- Get to know other parents in the school.
- Attend parent meetings; volunteer to help.
- Plan time as a family to relieve stress, strengthen family ties and keep perspective. Remember that families can be a steady source of support for one another through all kinds of transitions.

Keep positive:

- Expect the transition to be successful. Your positive attitude can help your child be positive, too. Let your child know you are sure she will do fine and remind her that adjustment takes time.



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—adapted from "School Transitions: Tips for Parents" The Family Works. Check their web site, <http://www.thefamilyworks.org> for more tips.